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APRIL COMES EARLY

by Carl John Bostelmann



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APRIL COMES EARLY



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Carl John Bostelmann



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TO MY MOTHER, TO MY COUSIN IDA
AND TO MY LADY, BECAUSE OF WHOM
APRIL HAS COME EARLY

231173

Certain of these poems have appeared in *Contemporary Verse*, *The Emerson Quarterly*, *Bozart*, *The Prism*, *The Harp*, *The Passaic Daily News*, *The Grub Street Book of Verse* (1928), *Japm: The Poetry Weekly*, *Braithwaite's Anthology of Magazine Verse* (1928), and through the Barton Syndicate. Several have previously appeared in *Patterns For Pan*. Special acknowledgment is due G. Schirmer Inc., for *I Hear Thee Sweetly Singing*, *Nightingale*.

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FOREWORD

BY WILLIAM CUMMINGS

During the past three or four years it has been interesting to watch Carl John Bostelmann coming on toward consciousness. During some such undetermined period he has made claim upon the communal attention by inserting in local newspapers, from time to time, compositions in verse. Rutherford, Passaic, and other communities in northern New Jersey came to know him as a poet—or at least as a young fellow who wrote verse.

It was almost a unique distinction in that area, but not quite, for in the same region William Carlos Williams flourished, progressively strengthening his international reputation as an American who really has something to say. The things that Bostelmann was writing were not at all in the same category as the things that Williams was writing; as against the older man's outstanding individualism, the younger man's productions were distinctly "regular," even old-fashioned. But on the whole the inhabitants of the regional Jersey towns took kindly to Bostelmann's offerings. He was very young. He was very young, yet his poetry wasn't very "modern," which was both surprising and odd. He was so very young that there were sympathetic souls who hoped he'd entirely escape from the glamors of the wanton muse—when he should come to be a little older, when he should come to know a little more.

But last year *Hedges, Hills and Horizons* appeared. That thin volume of seventy-odd poems was a collection

of vagrant pieces gathered from sources as scattered as the title indicates; but there was, nevertheless, a taut cord which consistently held them all together—the cord of a clear poetic aspiration. What that first volume of Bostelmann's poems showed, in spite of blemishes, was that, with all his vagrancy, he wasn't merely vagrant. Poetry was the definite objective of all his wandering—Poetry, consciously sought though not, happily, too much defined. He subscribed to the rules of no school, he lent volume to the protest of no cult. He was writing poetry on no abstract basis whatever, but for the satisfaction of Carl John Bostelmann.

This matter of the young man's vagrancy has more than one facet. He had gone west in an errant mood, had seen the Pacific from an aesthetic—or, perhaps more accurately, from an intellectual-emotional—peak in Darien. He learned for himself that the western sea may be either as gray or as blue as the eastern; he beheld the ultimate majesty of mountains, and sensed the quality of death that lives in desert places; he absorbed the flavor of that other air, that different sun; and he caught glimpses of an historical past different from anything which his native east has to show. Consequently, his first thin volume contained such poems as *Song of the Pacific*, *Epitaph For an Indian*, *San Francisco*, *Evening Song*, and other pieces distinctly western in content, and side by side with them he gave us *Lake Willoughby*, *Regret*, *Song For Whalers*, *April*, and others distinctly eastern. He remained and worked in the west for a time, trying new paths in that new environment, distinctly "away from home" and on his own. Neither

the element of independence nor the element of adventure in that sojourn is vitiated by the fact that other Hobohemians were sharing it with him, for they were all young, as he was, they all took things as they came, more or less, as he did. For all of them it was true experience, despite its hey-dey character, experience consciously sought and riskily endured.

That western trip and that first volume of verse contain the key to Bostelmann's personality; but they contain the key to more; and because they do, at this point the case of Carl John broadens away from itself and becomes a text for wider application.

The world is pretty well "fed up" on the general topic of modern youth. It has even been suggested that modern youth is too much with us—such an opinion being, of course, a matter of contacts. The truth is that in this mechanistic time not only youth but much of the rest of the world is all but lost—all but lost in its own intellectualism—in the chaos of its own stupendous achievements. Generally speaking, we all have too much of everything but genuine desire. Private intention has been swallowed up in the movements of the crowd. Men and women in masses run hither and thither, seeking only the latest thing; and the latest thing is commonly some flash product of organized facility, rarely the inspired product of a single soul. The single soul is trampled and crushed in the press of our myriad organizations; we have forgotten that without the individual soul organizations would be impossible; the propaganda of organizations has us running in circles,

like beasts in a stockade, terrified and half-crazed by the ballyhoo of their indefatigable pursuit . . .

But the day of the ballyhoo is passing, terminated by its own intensity. The voice of the individual soul is not only the most rare and arresting sound in the world today, but it is destined to be the outstanding sound of the future.

There lies the answer to the riddle of the modern sphinx—an answer which de Unamuno has most democratically hit upon, nationally, for Spain. De Unamuno cries out to the individual to be himself, emotionally, temperamentally, actually, bravely, honestly. What implications that gospel may have for the Spaniard I do not precisely know; but its application to life in the United States is patent. We have surrendered almost every right and responsibility we ever had into the keeping of some organization, and the result is that we are all more or less at the mercy of a host of agents, from the apartment house janitor and the subway guard up to that vicar of destiny, the president of the soulless corporation for which we work—to say nothing of politics.

It was natural that out of the agonies of such a state a protesting philosophy of individualism should emerge, and it is a matter of fact that Individualism is upon us—not the old super-egotism and pride which have so recently been tested and found weak, and not any vague objective striving after esoteric justifications such as that which has recently disrupted the arts; but an Individualism based on inherent human quality, unprejudiced except against the snobberies of pose and pattern, shunning cults and the cramp

of expedient conformities, and standing frankly before the face of men for what it is in fact, neither more nor less, but courageous in its own right, and unashamed of being itself. In a new sense, the day of self-determination has dawned, not only in politics, but in the private lives of human beings.

This is the tale that youth has been trying, more or less unconsciously, to tell us during the past ten or fifteen years—a story that we have been too dull or too distracted to grasp. Just as in the midst of life we are in death, so in the midst of our established phase of multifarious organization we are in a state of change; and youth has been giving us indications of the change's direction. The change was of course inevitable, for the individual soul is the arbiter of all cultures, the existence of the individual soul is the test of all the worlds men make. Keyserling has said, “. . . There is clearly only one categorical imperative of general validity: That of the courage to be true to one's self.”

Nothing could be more direct than Bostelmann's relation to this new Individualism. His independence need not here be set down at length. Let this suffice as indication: In a region where, commonly, poets are neither born nor made, he has become a poet; in that region the only living poet whom he might have taken for model is one of the foremost “moderns,” both in relation to form and in relation to content, but Carl John is not modern, in the same sense, at all. On the other hand, he is thoroughly modern, as befits his years, completely a part of the Individ-

ualistic movement of the generation which is presently to have its day. Entering upon the career of poet, he had no justifications beyond the simple inspiration of his own impulse and desire; in pursuing the career of poet he is registering his definite reach toward private freedom, he is risking his future directly on his faith in himself. With the publication of this second book of poems, *April Comes Early*, he is throwing his weight into the scales which balance the future against the present precisely where that weight normally belongs. In doing so he not only justifies himself up to the moment, but he measurably justifies the philosophy of his generation, for this present volume is good work—a splendid advance beyond *Hedges, Hills and Horizons*.

Into the melee of the present, then, this young man has come, presenting himself as a poet. It would be absurd to say that he is the voice of his generation—since his generation is to be extraordinarily individualistic, as has been indicated—yet in a wider sense, he is exactly that. But he is not pretending to sing for his generation; he is singing for himself—independently and happily, with the poet's inalienable joy and sorrow and protest. Because he is singing for himself, he will be heard. Because he is singing independently, we shall listen. His poetic inspiration is authentic in its own right; his present aspect is not a pose but motion, completely free of affectation; his candor is wholly courageous and clean. This voice is a type of individual integrity—the most arresting sound in the world today, and foretelling the future.

WILLIAM CUMMINGS

APRIL COMES EARLY

APRIL COMES EARLY

Oh, the earth sings and the sky sings,
And my heart sings clearly.
Life's a real song, youth's a wild song,
Love's a grand song surely!
Oh, my ears strain and my eyes close,
For the earth sings for the earth knows,
And the sky sings for the sky knows
 April comes early!

Oh the earth's song and the sky's song
Are my heart's song, surely!
From the green hills to the green seas
The river flows pearly,
And the dawn glows like a blown rose,
For a dream comes as a dream goes.
Oh, my heart sings for my heart knows
 April comes early!

SPRING WIND IN THE WILLOWS

RELEASE

I am the gladdest person on the street;
Released, my heart leaps in its ecstasy!
I tread on clouds—I cannot keep my feet
On fettered ground. It was not made for me.

My reason warns restraint. I should be quiet
In deeper meditation than fool's thought.
But I am willed to free my soul to riot,
Forgetting lessons most severely taught.

I smile and bow to everyone I meet.
My footsteps sing, You're Free, My Lad, You're Free!
And, though I stride along Convention Street,
I touch no stones that were not made for me.

DUNE WIND

I have stood on the shore;
I have laughed to the roar
Of tumultuous strength when green waters
Broke white.
I have learned from the sound
Of the wind on the ground,
Like a whisper which laughed in the darkness
Of night.

I have learned that the roar
Of the surf on the shore
Is a language well-spoken, a lesson
For me.
I have learned from the tunes
Of the wind on the dunes,
In the silence which speaks the quiescence
Of sea.

I HEAR THEE SWEETLY SINGING,
NIGHTINGALE

(FOR IDA)

I hear thee sweetly singing, nightingale,
Too dear a song for ever mortal man to learn!
I shall contrive to cherish that rich secret of thy tale
So long as sunset and the stars return.

No tongue can sing thee. No eye may see
Thy slow flight failing down the skies,
O spirit of the night!
No heart may know thy sacred mystery
Until the winds of dawn discover beauty dies.

I hear thee sweetly singing, nightingale,
Too dear a song for ever mortal man to learn!
I shall contrive to cherish that rich secret of thy tale
So long as sunset and the stars return.

FEMININE FAREWELL

I will climb a hill, I will go alone,
I will shout defiance to the sky!
I will make my independence known.

I will turn my back, I will shake my fist
Against all idle warnings of the wind!
They are jealous lips, those I have kissed.

I will laugh and feed you bitter bread.
I will break your heart quite willfully!
Plead as you may, love, knowing you must plead.

I will climb a hill, I will sing a song
Of rich regret that shall be mine alone!
I will know all tears the sad day long.

I will know all tears the sad day long.

QUESTIONS

Oh, what is beauty? asks the eye
Searching the sky.

Oh, what is music? asks the ear,
Eager to hear.

Oh what is this recurrent mood
All men must know?
Repeatedly requests the brain,
Again, again.

Oh, what is this wild-waking passion
Excites the flow
Of mortal blood?
Demands the heart, too, in like fashion.

* * * * *

All things that are alive do wonder—
For even the grass of the clod
Demands of the rain, of the thunder:
What is God?

I SING PROFESSING LOVE

I sing professing love
Without a lover,
I sing of tears which blind,
But do not weep.
What am I singing of—
The sheep in clover?
Alas, I can not find
A single sheep.

I sing of loneliness;
I am not lonely.
Then, is my music wrong
With too much fiction?
Amid this loveliness
Is my song only
A very simple song
Of contradiction?

I sing professing love;
I have no lover.
I sing of tears which blind;
I do not weep.
What am I singing of—
The sheep in clover?
Alas, I can not find
A single sheep.

MOUNTAIN TOP

I gaze wide-eyed, a world within my sight,
Winds of wide spaces on my burning cheek,
New depth of skies about me at this height,
New seas of distance stretching from the peak.

This is a mountain top, a summit crown,
A driven point into the farthest pale
Of blue! I cried. No valley called me down,
No shadow marked a dark, descending trail.

Attuned to height, reluctant to depart,
Entranced, winds of wide spaces in my hair,
A passion radiated from my heart,
Like inexpressible but vibrant prayer.

REPLY TO A FRIEND

You say that he is gone, forever gone,
Lost in departure, never to return
To greet the stars when moon-mists dance upon
The midnight meadow. Let us then adjourn
Our ancient council, for our hearth fires burn
With fading brilliancy, and you maintain
That he is gone and will not come again.

As twilight darkens, swallows circle low
And slow and silent vanish, one by one.
The moon ascends, enthralling shadows. Oh,
You say that he is gone, forever gone,
Yet, at this hour when the mists come on
And whip-poor-wills burst into sudden song,
Deep in my heart I know that you are wrong.

SPRING SONG

I can not tell you, dear,
What bids my heart to sing
Unless I say the year
Is young again with spring.

You can not understand
The beauty in your eyes.
You hear no quick demand
Awaking swift replies.

Be patient, for the moon
Has silvered all the sea.
The night is magic grown
With love's old mystery.

I dare not boldly say
What bids my heart to sing.
Oh, hills are green with May!
Oh, I am mad with spring!

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GRACE

They sit in prayer and, each with bended head,
They beg His grace before they break His bread,
So paying tithe of thankfulness to God
Who brings them grain from out of seed and sod.

They chant Amen, and dip the bread in wine
Pressed from the grape which grew upon the vine.
I sing thanksgiving to the soil and seed
Which bring me God, and justify my creed.

MARCHING RIVERS

Hark! Oh, hear the waters roll,
Rolling down to sea!
Hark! Oh, hear the marching rivers roar!
Listen to the paddles troll,
Trolling endlessly,
Like long surges sweeping down the shore!

Down from hill and forest height
Roads of waters run,
Thundering their latent might,
Shouting to the sun!
Music of a thousand torrents swells the symphony
Of rolling rivers marching to the sea.

Hark! Oh, hear the waters roll,
Rolling down to sea!
Hark! Oh, hear the voice of mountains roar!
Listen to the paddles troll,
Trolling endlessly,
Like long surges sweeping down the shore!

A DANCER SINGS

(FOR GRACE)

Let *me* die dancing!
Let me live out life's fevered minutes
In a song set to quick rhythm!
Sing for me no dirge, long and long!
May mine be feathered feet.
Give me the thrill, the wild thrill, swift and sweet!
Let me *die* dancing!

O fretful dark. O dim, forsaken dark,
Too soon, too soon
You sweep the summit stars to drown the moon!
O night which promises one futile, lingering spark
Of failing light, your slow-winged linnets
Sing too frail a song!
So, keep for me no chimney seat.
Let my stimulated pulses beat
Their bright abandon till the vestals swoon!
Till the Masters hark!

Let me die—*dancing*!

REQUIEM

Nothing can wake him now,
Poor tired lad
Who fell behind the plow.
I would not call it sad
He had to fall.
Nothing can wake him now,
Nothing at all.

It was a blessing quite
The sun should send
A pardon from his height
To bring to end
This servitude to soil.
The lad is done with toil.
The horse stands still.

Upon the hill
Dig there his grave, and furrow
It with his plough.
The lad is done with sorrow,
And no insistent morrow
Can wake him now.

WOOD ANEMONE

Awake to the joy hour
For chickadees sing
Of handfuls of windflower
And heartfuls of spring!

Where winter's wild horses
Have trampled the hill,
Are fury's vain forces
Frustrated and still.

The maples, protesting
The wintertime long,
Are gay with birds nesting,
And green with their song.

I walk in earth's bower,
And meadowlarks sing:
"Two handfuls of windflower!
A heartful of spring!"

SONG OF YOUTH

From dawn to sundown I will dwell apart
Upon an unmolested summit high,
Yet I will hear when valley vespers start
Their evening lullaby.

In solitude secure, my hermitage
Shall bar intrusion, yet a whispered sigh,
Tip-toe ascending with advancing age,
Shall bring mist to my eye.

Youth reckons not upon impending shadow,
Blind in the splendor of full noon-day light.
But zest is lost from lonely El dorado
When comes the darkening night.

So, from the sun-up till the twilight fades,
I will rejoice in hill-top liberty,
But dusk may find me safe behind drawn shades
In valley company.

FUGITIVE

If it be lovely music lends a dream
And takes us dancing where the stars are near,
More beautiful, that celestial song supreme
We can not hear.

If it be splendid vista to the west:
Sunset and river, hill and shadowed lea;
More splendid, then, that scene beyond the crest
We can not see.

Ah, love, what bliss magnificent you give
To them who seek and find you! Even so,
What greater bliss must be that fugitive
We can not know!

SONG OF SPRING

Spring's here! I see blue hills, blue waters
and blue skies.

The sun is bright. There shines new light in
children's eyes.

Life labors in each leafless limb. The birds
now sing

In truer tone their symphony of pregnant spring.
Brown turbid torrents race below a melting sun.
With winter's freight down to the gates of sea
they run.

Beside the river bank the willow trees are green,
Where the silver birches bend, where the gaunt
oaks lean.

Seeds of the season Time has sown in fertile loam.
Wide roadways beckon. From the sea long whispers
come.

The schoolboy lounges at his desk and dreams of
days

Beside a brook, and scorns the testy teacher's
gaze.

Spring's here! I see blue hills march by beneath
blue skies.

The old spring light now glistens bright in
children's eyes!

THE CALL TO ARMS

—Drums of doom are marching to the battle.
The bugle calls of death are crying, crying.
Come, Youth, the gods of hate demand your chattel!
Men, many men are needed for the dying!

The martial music of the regiments
Blare their insistent summons. From a hill
Bold banners float above ten thousand tents
Where multitudes are learning how to kill.

Hate, still thy drums! War, make thy trumpets mute!
Earth, stay vain sacrifice of singing sons
Gone forth to massacre! Love, give salute!
God! Save young laughter from the lust of guns!

FALLING STARS

If one would but see! If only one would wish
Whenever shooting stars plunge down the blue
Of night's dark silver curtain; for a good wish
Always will come true!

I love to walk alone, intent on heaven,
Watching and waiting for a star to fall
For me to see, for I have at least seven
Wishes for them all!

Strange, since she shared with me this secret magic
That night the first wish did come true, I find
That falling stars can be no longer tragic—
Love is not blind!

SONG AFTER SUMMER

Song will be quiet when the birds are gone,
Gone with the summer from the hills away.
Days will be lonely when the sky is grey,
For love is over when the summer's done.

Out of a hundred there remains but one
Who lingers till the frost. There comes a day
When he, too, takes his migratory way.
Song will be quiet when the birds are gone.

Into the south, where springtime stars have shone,
Lighting the sky for flocks to come in May,
The flocks return. No longer can they stay;
For love is over when the summer's done.

The hill is gaunt and desolate with stone.
The sky is darkly painted with dismay.
Gone is the summer from the hills away.
Song will be quiet when the birds are gone,
For love is over when the summer's done.

THERE ARE NO OBSTACLES TO LOVE

There are no obstacles to Love,
For all old demi-gods are dead.
I now sing canticles to Love
And wear Love's laurel round my head!

No obstacle can now exist,
For Love at last is canonised.
All lowly lips must pass unkissed,
For I by Love am recognised!

I sing my canticles to prove
That I have knelt and kissed the rod.
I'll take no love in lieu of Love!
I'll have no god in lieu of God!

HACKENSACK MEADOWS AT SUNSET

Salt marshes covered with a new, light fall of snow
Spread to all sides.

The creeks wear coats of ice, save where swift currents
flow,

Or race the tides.

Across this barren waste lies stretched a bold black band
Snow can't conceal—

Dull-colored ribbons cut a flooded frozen land
With threads of steel.

The world is dark, the melancholy season brings
A sky of grey.

Across the gloomy void a silent seabird wings
His lonely way.

Beyond the meadow reaches, on the city's crest,
There gleams a light—

Another—slowly thousands join in mute protest
Against the night.

LOVE

I am the music of youth
That calls in warm whispers to men,
Failing, and falling unanswered,
Still calling, and calling again.

I am the song in the heart
That echoes the cry of the soul.
How far and how faint, yet how clear
Does my resonance roll!

I am the pulse-beat of time
That fevers the blood, greens the sod.
I am the life of the world!
I am God.

THE NOON IS QUIET

The noon is quiet
With silence of a song.
He was just a boy,
A boy of fifteen golden years,
Alive with morning's riot.
But he is gone, gone
Where I can not say.
He was borne away
With his youth and summer joy
And laughter, like the dawn
Departed in the glory of the day.
My eyes are wet with twilight tears.
The noon is quiet,
The afternoon is long.

ONE ADMONISHES A BEGGAR

Tell man no tale of woe which is pathetic.
He dare not pity. He dares give no penny.
Only the gods can be apologetic.
Beg not for alms, for man can give not any!

I do not know that which the gods intended—
I am illiterate of holy teaching.
Better to be our anguish never ended?
Better to be our hands forever reaching?

I can not say. Gods can dispense their pity
Upon the one who begs or on the many,
For all are beggars in this golden city,
Yet I have never seen a holy penny.

A SONG AGAINST THE MOON

To all who walk abroad to find
The starlight on the still lagoon
I say, go now and draw the blind
Against the magic of the moon.

Of Psyche, now do I entreat:
If lovers' lips must burn, spare mine—
Let lotus spice my bread and meat,
And put a poppy in my wine!

O moon, whatever dreams you give
To lovers, these I bid you keep,
For days are long enough to live,
And nights were better spent with sleep.

I HAVE DREAMED A DREAM OF HEAVEN

I have dreamed a dream of heaven
Born of sorrow in a clod,
Fairer far than any given
With the majesty of God.

I have known a sweeter singing
Than was born of breast or bird,
In the song which loss is bringing
After love's unspoken word.

Beauty, pour your wine of sorrow!
I will drink your toast with tears.
I will greet a dead tomorrow
With bold music for the years.

SONG OF SINGING

I've sung of sunrise and bright bursting days
In countless songs and, too, I've sung the sky,
Nor yet enough I've sung my earnest praise,
For few have pierced the misty morning haze
As I!

I've sung of wind—how many times I've sung
Of passing breezes and the grasses' sigh!
Nor yet enough, for I have run among
The hilltops when impending tempests hung
On high!

I love the seas, and I shall sing again
My songs of waters to so testify.
O pulsing vastness, how I know your strain!
What secrets do we share—the shouting main
And I!

So, still I sing of rising dawn, and breeze
Hill-scented, and the arching azure sky,
For I am servant to my memories,
And never in my heart the songs of seas
Can die!

A SONG AGAINST YEARS

The dews which dye ripe meadows green
Evaporate beneath the sun.
The laughter heard at seventeen
Becomes the sigh at twenty-one.

The zest which crowns the morning scene
Is lost when sun-rise mists are gone.
Behold, the joy of seventeen
Becomes the woe of twenty-one!

The dove which wings where willows lean
Falls soon before the fowler's gun.
The life that thrills at seventeen
Becomes a task at twenty-one.

What matters love? What can it mean
When time denies what youth's begun!
The dreams so dear at seventeen
Are old regrets at twenty-one.

SONG OF AFTERTIME

Rest is remuneration after pain,
Reward in which there is no vain mistaking.
Sleep is good tonic to a tired brain,
Sleep undisturbed by sudden dream or waking.

Like song, dear presence in long silences,
Dream comes to comfort lover's loneliness;
But, dreaming done, the charm of distances
Is truer trove than ever love's caress.

Death brings no terror of a dark distress.
Come, centuries of silence without number!
A lover lies in blest forgetfulness,
Soothed with night's final anodyne of slumber.

OH, I HAVE BEEN A VERY LOVER

Oh, I have been a very lover
Through all the days of summer fever!
Oh, I have gaily wandered over
Hills long unknown but to discover
Young lips to greet with young caresses,
Youth's lovely lips in lovely faces,
Love's distant lips at distant places!
Oh, I have been a very lover,
But not alone to lips I suffer,
For I have loved the startled quiver
Of aspens wading down a river,
And I accept what hills would offer,
And climb steep trails where white peaks tower.
Yet hills alone do not deliver
Appeals which bid me be their lover,
For I can lay as gentle finger
As can the gentlest of the graces
Upon the humblest of the clover.
And I can stoop to touch a flower
As tenderly as any shower,
And I can still my heart to linger
When twilight hangs and swallows hover
By shadowed lane and blossomed bower.
But I have met no sweeter, rougher
Subjects for my wild embraces
Than the lovely lips in summer fever!
Oh, I have been a very lover!

DANDELIONS

A SONG FOR A THRUSH

Lost are the lyrics of the west wind's song
Which floods my garden with the sound of bells,
Which rides unmeasured distances along
To woo my heart with music from the hills,
For God, inspired, creating birds
To tell His tale, gave them no words.

A SONG FOR A HUNDRED DAYS

To you, great god who are the sun,
I chant amen the summer long!
You are the one omniscient one
For whom I mold my summer song.
With hymns I praise your golden sword,
O king who daily knights me lord!

DANCER

The morning rain
Comes dancing in the slippers of the wind
Against the pane
To waken me, so waking, I can find
Her waiting in the meadow when I stir,
In wind shoes, from my bed, to answer her.

EVENING MOOD

Even the sparrow
Spreads a silent wing
And seems to float where shadows grow,
Upon a wind that does not blow—
Even the swallow
Bursts his throat to sing!

LINES TO A LOVE AT SEVENTEEN

As dew brings gayer green
To faded grasses,
So does her smile enrich me
When she passes.
To me she is the queen
Of all the lasses.

DECISION

For days now I have had my eye on
Yonder golden dandelion.

If I do not pluck it quick, it
Soon will be too late to pick it,

For all the gold that crowns her bonnet
Withers soon when age comes on it!

Today my lawn is gold. Tomorrow
I may build my song on sorrow.

EMILY DICKINSON

She sang a song
To greet the passing years,
And no one knew to listen, no one heard
Until long afterward.
Now start late tears,
Late tears and long,
To grieve a vanished bird.

JOAQUIN MILLER

The melody of mountain and the cadence born of sea
Ride the wings of valley wind and march by hill and river,
For lilt of mountain music and tempest tympani
Tuned his voice which walks abroad long roads of earth
forever.

A SONG OF EARTH

I, who have loved the earth,
Who love it still,
Who have sung songs by hill,
Sung songs by hearth,
Shall ever love the earth,
Shall know the thrill
Of singing songs of earth
By hearth and hill.

LIBRARY

Here, in a world explored by careful eyes,
An unknown continent across the sea
Calls in a whisper to all men and me
To come, to seek, to find new paradise!
Here is haven where rich treasure lies
Waiting the argonaut's discovery!

QUATRAINS

MARCELLINE

Pride made him jester when he wore the crown
Proclaiming him the master of his craft.
When crowds forgot, then Hope became the clown.
Fate watched the futile pantomime, and laughed.

MARTYR

He willfully refused to call those despots kin,
Who trod down his ideals, and boldly he
Did sacrifice his transient breath to win
More certain immortality.

AFTER READING KILMER

When first I felt the lure of song
I sang incessantly;
But, now, my voice does not belong
To me!

LAMENT AFTER LOVE

I climbed the hill to meditate
 On certain matters of the heart.
The side was steep, the task was great;
I climbed the hill to meditate,
But, lo, I reached the crest too late,
 So tardy was my final start.
I climbed the hill to meditate
 On certain matters of the heart.

THERE IS NO SOLACE THAT I KNOW

There is no solace that I know
To soothe whatever pain is mine.
The rambler and the columbine
Within my garden gayly grow,
And honey bees come there to dine;
But now, to soothe this pain of mine,
There is no solace that I know.

ANSWERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SONG AFTER APRIL

April is gone, my April, past and gone
That lovely interim of lazy days,
And ruthless time, forever pressing on
Relentlessly, is deaf to plea or praise.
So I must wait. Another year of pain
Must fill my heart till April comes again.

April is gone, and gone are hours blest
With lonely road and river in the vale
Beyond the Kittatinnies to the west.
April is gone, and so I must avail
My thought to tasks much more unpleasant
Than chasing toads or searching for a pheasant.

O idle April, how indeed I yearn
Your freedom and that certain ecstasy
Of basking in the sun. I would return
To browse along the river now, to see
The wind romp through the hillside grasses high,
Green with much morning dew! All day
I pout, for singing April passed me by,
Leaving me dreams too timorous for May.

April is gone, but I am quite aware
That April is not lost to me forever,
That jealous time can not withhold my share
Of lonely valley road and valley river,
When I have served the necessary chore,
Then April days return to me once more.

DREAM HARBOR

A bay of blue behind a grey sea wall
Where anchored craft nod restless but at ease,
In harbor home and sheltered from the seas
That rode the tempest of the off-shore squall.
Now others round the inlet with their haul.

A bay of blue beside a road where palms
On dress parade lift up their tufted crowns
Against a sun that loves the tropic towns—
That warms a lepered peon, lisping psalms,
Squat by the wall, his hand outstretched for alms.

A bay of blue, a sky of blue o'erhead,
Cloudless and constant to the wind that climbs
My flowered slope with faint cathedral chimes.
By night pale moon and silver stars o'erspread
My sleeping white-walled city, roofed with red.

A bay of blue, and I, above the bay
At my hill villa, ever gazing down,
Dream-silent as the tranquil tropic town,
Scanning the hills clothed in eternal May,
Searching the seas throughout each dream-filled day.

EVENING ALONG THE PASSAIC RIVER

The long day over, one by one
In eastern skies the pale stars peep.
There is not any end to sorrow,
For pang and pain are never gone;
They rise again with waking morrow.
Still does the weary river keep
Calm in the oblivion of sleep
That is eternal interlude
Of twilight. In dark solitude,
Down with the ebb, the shadowed waters creep
Their silent way to sea.

The sun descended, darkness now
Is lowered on the river vale.
I know there is no end to sorrow.
The hours their endless furrows plough
With tireless oxen of tomorrow.
How beautiful the heavens pale
When noon winds take the twilight trail
And leave the willows to the night!
Dream-delicate in silver light
Of stars, slow waters ripple, shadows sail
Their silent way to sea.

Soft brilliance of new moon, like rain
In gentle April, falls. Moon-mist
Upon the evening river dances,
Like childhood's fairies come again

With memory of dream-romances.
Mother-of-pearl and amethyst
Shimmer where the stream is kissed
By starlight. I forget the morrow,
Its endless task of toil and sorrow,
And, with the ebb, with shadowed waters, creep
My silent way to sea.

HERITAGE

(FOR JIM OWENS)

You're native to the Highlanders,
The Gordon Clan of Highlanders,
Bold men who plundered valleyfolk
And drove away their sheep.
You're kin to their adventuring;
The songs they sang, now you would sing—
In vain you try at conquering
Desires that do not sleep!

Your grandsire was a drummerboy,
A daring youth, that drummerboy,
Who rolled the Balaclava charge
And saw the red line sweep,
An avalanche across the plain,
Incited by his low refrain
That roused the Highland blood again—
The blood that does not sleep!

You say you know a pilot's pride,
Have been a partner with the tide
Where sky and sea are sapphire,
Each far horizon fades
In distant mystery unknown—
Winged by a wind for ages blown,
A wind Ulysses might have known
Had his ships run the Trades!

Now, through your heart the hill blood runs,
And echo there Crimean guns
That thrilled a fearless drummerboy
 In service for the Queen.
You hunger for marauding raids,
For close pursuits and ambuscades,
For bivouacs and dress parades
 Your eyes have never seen.

You're tried and tired by the town.
Its very quiet wears you down—
The roving fever's got you and
 You cannot rest at ease.
Your heart cries for the hills, I ken—
A highland lake, a lowland glen.
You want to ride the Trades again
 Down to the southern seas!

TRIOLETS OF UNREST

The red gods whisper clear to me,
But, oh, the love that bids me stay!
From mount to mead, from shore to sea,
The red gods whisper clear to me.
My memories grow more dear to me
And old songs lure my heart away
When red gods whisper clear to me.
But, oh, the love that bids me stay!

Strange roads are splendid with romance,
But, oh, I love my native town!
Adventure crowns the world's expanse,
Strange roads are splendid with romance,
And beauty crowds the vagrant glance
At vistas which bold eyes have known.
Strange roads are splendid with romance
But, oh, I love my native town!

Their campfires flame upon the hill,
But, oh, the comfort of my hearth!
Old comrades are awaiting still,
Their campfires flame upon the hill.
Again awakes the ancient thrill
That lures all lovers of the earth.
Their campfires flame upon the hill.
But, oh, the comfort of my hearth!

IVISWOLD

'Way back when Spanish galleons were
A-sailing on the sea,
The ivied walls of Iviswold
Meant mystery to me.
But I was bold. I had been told
Romance and history.

Back from the road the castle stood,
Aloof from enemies.
The thick, brown walls, the turrets brown
Reared dark behind the trees—
The fortress of some coastal town
Repulsing piracies.

Sometimes I'd climb the iron fence
That runs along the wall.
Sometimes I'd hear a buccaneer
Who'd boast: "The gates must fall!
Tonight we'll dine and drink our wine
In yonder banquet hall!"

Through all the years from childhood on
Until the grand estate
When youth becomes the citizen,
And yearnings moderate,
The oaken doors of Iviswold
Did not capitulate.

Still does the castle keep its place,
By buccaneers unwon.
The red roof-tops of Iviswold
Glare brilliant in the sun.
But all my joy of pirates bold
And galleons rich with Spanish gold
Is gone, for I am wise and old,
With all my dreaming done.

A SERF SPEAKS

Down in the Pit I sweat for wine and meat
At wages of a serf. I wear old clothes
That age my fifty years. Nobody knows
I have appreciation for the sweet
And finer sort of beauty. Man's conceit
Confines his wisdom. Fashion plucks the rose
And wears it in his hat, and blindly goes
Crushing wild poppies underneath his feet.

Indoors, at easy tasks, the clerks, content
With salaries I never hoped to earn,
Are satisfied with leisure oft misspent.
They do not notice when quickened fires burn
Within their souls. They know not. So much worse
Their chiding when I fret or rave or curse.

They call me Shakespeare, merely for the jest,
And little know that that no clerk can claim
Is mine. But then, indeed, I'll not proclaim
A talent or a twist of mind. I rest
This secret, meekly hidden in my breast,
And they see nothing but a grim and game
Old greybeard who is butt for their defame
And mockery. At that, perhaps, it's best.

They are a higher grade of laborer. They see
Not, care not, nor seem to understand

How I can doff these rags of poverty

To occupy a seat up at the Grand
Opera. They hear my curse, my scream,
But hear no song, nor know what dreams I dream.

EVANESCENT YEAR

Summer's song lost, before it seemed to start,
My joys diminish, sorrows are combined.
December lies like shadow on my heart.
I feel my spirit, swept by sudden wind,
Gaunt as a leafless sapling. Autumn's art
Presents a painful picture to my mind . . .
For darkness to the eye is most unkind.

The sky is low, spread sinister with storm.
The hills are now a melancholy range,
Forsaken in an empty world—they form
A barrier that makes one's neighbor strange.
They seem to wait for winter to perform
The miracle of blizzard's blessed change . . .
A miracle that spring must disarrange.

All summer stars have fled the firmament—
Where in the heaven hides the waning moon?
Has sudden darkness drowned the continent
And draped a curtain over sky so soon?
How fares my precious valley of content,
The sunlight and summer's green festoon? . . .
The youth that I abandoned at the noon!

TRYST

When the twilight is drowned in a rainbow of gold,
And the hills to the west lie in sharp silhouette,
Then the homesters take solace from melodies old,
And they pray to the red gods that they may forget.
But when twilight is drowned in a rainbow of gold,
Then the dreamer lies drunken with wine of regret.

When the stars hang like jewels in heaven's dark dome,
And the glow of the moon falls like rain on the road,
Then the homesters keep inglenook-corners at home.
There together they dream in their blessed abode.
But when stars hang like jewels in heaven's dark dome,
Then the pilgrim goes forth to the moon and the road.

When the midnight is tolled, from the bronze in the tower,
Then the echoes roll down with a resonance deep,
To plant magical music in songs of the hour
Which may visit the homesters now sweet in their sleep.
But when midnight is tolled from the bronze in the tower,
Then the gypsy arises, his old tryst to keep!

FOUR FALLEN SINGERS SLEEP

At Skyros a singer sleeps, a warrior sleeps
At Lemnos in ancient Aegean Greece,
Beside a darkened, silent, southern sea.
At Missolonghi prayers that war may cease
Are sung by patient Goddesses of Peace.
A century ago, before the flaming steep,
A singer died, died at Missolonghi.
Upon the altar of their liberty
He fell to make oppressed peoples free.
At Belloy-en-Santerre, in France a singer keeps
His rendezvous with Death, a warrior, he
Who smote invading hordes defiantly
And bravely sang and bade his songs increase!
Beside the wooded bank of Ourcq lies he
Whom God gave gift of song to praise the tree
And herald love. He rests contentedly
In his new freedom won of Life's release.
There, by the wooded bank of River Ourcq, he sleeps.

One singer sleeps at Skyros, and another keeps
His dreamless dream in Hucknall's parish peace.
At Belloy, far removed from native lea,
A third finds slumber in the arms of Her Who heaps
The lotus on Her lover's eyes. So he
Still keeps his midnight rendezvous. A soldier sleeps
Beside the Ourcq, praising his Deity.
No need to make lament for loss. Surcease

They know. There is no need for tears while we
Can see their beauty flaming sunset-sea,
Knowing, when we are gone, our sons, at peace,
Shall hear the sleepers' music, bold and free,
Shaking the heights through all eternity.

VAGABOND

Along the wharves he sways to take his ship
Bound out at evening on a season's cruise.
Brine stains his garments from a recent trip,
White dust of distant shore sifts from his shoes.

His air is strange. His garb is quaint and queer,
This wanderer of trail, this son of sea.
Quite welcome falls the watch bell on his ear—
Romance invites him with her mystery.

So born to arching sky and restless, wide
Expanse of wave, he roves the world at will.
His pulse is fevered with the flow of tide.
His heart rejoices in the height of hill.

Though he has felt the sea winds' cool caress,
And held the warm earth in a close embrace,
Denied has been love's smallest tenderness,
And missed, those hands which might have touched his face.

NEW YEAR BELLS

Across the world stretched still and white,
Under the stars and midnight moon,
Resound the faint cathedral chimes
From distant towns. Great bells are tolled
By joyous arms to wake the night.
Alas, the hours fly too soon
For this brief message of the times:
"Ring in the new! Ring out the old!"

Love is the magic of the throng,
Smiling and singing on its way,
Lending joy to the souls of sorrow,
Bidding the dying year adieu.
Hark to the story of the song:
"Lay by the darkened yesterday!
Look to the sunrise of the morrow!
Ring out the old! Ring in the new!"

Over the rooftops of the world
The chorus of the chanters swells.
Loud mounts the music, echoes roll,
The earth sings as her cymbals ring
To heaven's heights where stars are hurled.
Hark to the calling of the bells!
Hark to their summons as they toll:
"The king is dead! Long live the king!"

STANZAS AFTER NOSTALGIA

The world is very beautiful,
The strange road is splendid,
And life is real and wonderful
Far away from town.
But beauty can not heal the heart,
Keep it always mended,
When longing rends the will apart,
And wears the pride down.

The road away is mine to take,
And I desire to travel.
By valley stream and mountain lake,
I would rove and roam.
Both sea and trail are excellent.
I like brine and gravel,
Until regret be evident,
And love calls me home.

What are these ties that won't relent,
Nor ever cease to bind?
Can apron strings and sentiment
Halt a pilgrim's quest?
The world is very beautiful,
But eyes of love are blind.
Who says town days are drab and dull?
Let tired feet rest.

DECLARATION

(FOR WILLIAM CUMMINGS)

I gather glamour as I go
Cleaving to my destinations.
All of grandeur, all of glory
Magnify in me!
I walk, and watch all green things grow,
Blest by earnest consecrations.
Each has given me its story
Unreservedly.

My rhythms over-span the sea.
Mountains bow in their revering.
Each is mine, to swell my being,
Mine, to meet my need.
So do I wander purposely,
Always feeling, always hearing,
Always tasting, always seeing—
Always bursting seed.

I gather glamour as I go,
Rich in natal compensations.
None may lead, and no one follows;
I alone am king!
I seek and see, and learn, and know,
Cleaving to my destinations.
Larks are dumb, and stricken swallows
Listen when I sing.

LITTLE SHIPS

I do not know the wide world as I would.
Confined my gypsying has been to trips
Short and infrequent. Yet, how oft I've stood
Lost in my dreaming of the little ships,

Bold little ships that brave a maiden course,
Bound down the Trades to lost Hesperides,
Sailed by stout hearts that seek a legend-source,
To keep a rendezvous with virgin seas.

The Spanish Main, palm archipelago,
Time-mocked atolls, and measureless expanse
Of sundown ocean, amber-indigo,
And little ships pursuing old romance:

That is the vision which invites my soul.
But fools are failing as but fools can be.
So I remain, while questing rovers roll
Romancing down strange shore and stranger sea.

Each little ship foams out with zealous zest,
And vanishes in mists of mystery.
Each fevered pilgrim churns a wake to west,
Wild-wanderlusting leagues of unknown sea.

Bold little ships, they brave the tempest's rage
To win Dream Harbor and her languid skies.

They drift the trackless lanes to anchorage
In calm lagoon, in tropic paradise.

O little ships, you journey free and far—
Life lies beyond the sunset, gypsies say.
But I am anchored to the evening star,
And through the night sleep golden dreams away.

RIVER MOODS

PARNASSUS BY THE PASSAIC

The Gods inhabit Mount Olympus still
And reign with wisdom. Fresh as morning dew
In Arcady, the voices Homer knew
Sing on the wind from far Parnassus hill
And tell to me their secret. I can hear
The music of the Muses as they sing:
Ulysses is not dead. Years can not bring
Oblivion. Dreams do not disappear.

Upon the splendid heights of Helicon,
Where Pegasus has roamed in pasture free,
Shall poets wander when all time is gone
Into the twilight west. I know! I see
The chariot of Zeus when legions take
Their noisy way beyond the dark Passaic.

Here, by the river, is a solitude
Wherein no stranger brings distracting sound.
Here, by still waters, is a realm well-found
For dreaming and remembering. I would
That friendships made and in my youth forgot
Could come again to keep this dream with me,
Where meadow music sings down to the sea:
O yester-time, forbear, forget me not!

Beside the willows where the grass is deep
Comes Mentor once again to meditate:

Better to dream with Orpheus and weep
Than know the day which death shall predicate.
I gaze abroad and find an old star's gleam
Ride on the ripples of the quiet stream.

Troy keeps a tryst with immortality
And reads no ruin of encroaching age
In marching centuries. Despite the rage
Of finite forces, Jason sails the sea
Still searching for the magic golden fleece,
Still seeking, though he found it yesterday.
They did not die beside Thermopolae
Who fought and fell to keep their native peace.

Beauty of Helen wears no cloak of crime.
Ardor of Paris bears no sinner's shame.
And each dawn sets, despite the test of time,
The top-less towers of Ilium aflame!
The truth is, as the ancient bard hath sung:
O Helen still is fair, and Paris, young!

Down from Olympus comes the sound of feast,
The joyous laughter made when dreamers dine.
There are the Rulers Who are proved divine.
There dwell the Gods. And now, from out the east
Comes song, born by the side of Hippocrene,
Which shouts that youth need never to grow old
Or Pegasus become enstalled. Behold!
He comes to graze where grass is young and green!

Here, by the river, I must run and shout,
Crying the claim of great discovery!
The voice from Arcady disperses doubt,
And, watching from the river bank, I see
The constellations keep their certain flights
Through endless cycles of eternal nights.

ADMONITION

Sit where you are, old huntsman. Do not rise
To take the trail, whatever horns may call.
Sit where you are. The stag may leap and fall;
The hounds may tune the wind with thrilling cries
Of close pursuit, but now, if you are wise,
You will not leave your chair. No lure at all
Should rouse your mount from out his bedded stall
To give the chase, whatever were the prize!

No stirrup-cut, old huntsman! Do you think
You should be shouting with the eager dogs?
Here, take this toddy, dream the toast, and drink,
Then contemplate the hearthstone's lazy logs.
Forget the vision which the horn inspired!
The stag is fresh, but Pegasus is tired.

RIVER SECRET

No one may know of whom I dream each day.

No eye may see with whom I keep a tryst

Down by the river when the morning mist
Expires with dying stars. No tongue can say
What sacred presence makes a holiday

In Heaven of my hour undismissed

By time's precession, when my rhapsodist
Comes to delight with early matinée.

Love is the language which all beauty speaks

With sympathetic voice. Along the stream

At sunrise, when the soft dawn slowly breaks,

Tingeing the vale with splendor of a dream,

The river whispers to the willow tree,

And beauty keeps a rendezvous with me.

THE POET

Life makes of him a singing apostate
Who knows no duty but his gift of song,
Who knows no burden but the world's old wrong,
Who knows no pleasure but denial of fate,
Who laughs at problems which perplex the great,
And sings of visions rich as days are long.
He serenades an uninspired throng
With tales of truths they can not contemplate.

So, like the pilgrim, who is his blood brother,
He walks the roads and asks no special favors
Of monied men he meets. His old earth mother
Is his one oracle. His music savors
Of her maternal love, and seems to speak
The proof of gods which priests so vainly seek.

PREMONITION

When I am weary of the weight of years

Upon stooped shoulders, I shall keep the corner
Where the fire burns low. Not my cheeks for tears
Of youth departed! Shall I be the mourner
For sorrow in a boy's uncertain eyes?

Must I shed tears not mine except for weeping?
Love it is which madly lives, sadly dies—
Bones that are tired ache for the final sleeping.

I know I shall not want the silence then,
But quick, loud, boyhood shouts for company—
Keeping the chimney-seat, reluctant when
Last hours bring their sweet serenity.
Lad, do not mock me as a fool of men
For sentiment in my senility.

CHRIST IN THE ANDES

High on the rim ridge of the Argentine,
Where Chile's summit limit lifts unto
The altitudes of swift cerulean blue,
Christ stands in molded metal, polished clean
By mountain winds from higher spaces. I
Stand at His feet still rich with dust of earth,
And know humility and know His worth
Who holds His cross so clear against the sky.

As Christ stands here, so does He walk again
In Nazareth and Oberammergau,
His face still meek, forgetting plot and pain,
Remembering, perhaps, that Judas heard
Sweet voices in his heart long afterward,
Such sweeter voices than even I hear now.

CHOICE

Not for me were made the level lowlands
 Stretched mile on weary mile without a rise,
 Dusty and dry, such flats as agonize
And craze a hill-born being. Youth demands
Beauty and freedom. Vulcan understands.
 The high horizons of the hills I prize,
 Pale, lofty ridges, soothing to the eyes.
There, moulded by the Maker's slow skilled hands,
The ranges roll, the clouds crawl on each crest,
 Like bearded counselors who congregate
 About the ancient passage-place of Time
That skirts the rims and races to the west.
 Each time I pass, the summits consecrate
 Reach out their arms, inviting me to climb.

BEN HUR ON BARCLAY STREET

The beast sweats toiling, intimate with pain
Of cobblestones which torture, piercing hot!
His steel-shod hoofs strike sparks availing not.
Disdainfully the driver shouts, profane,
And wields the goad of lashing whip and rein,
Scourging the broken charger to a trot—
His overloaded dray, the chariot
Which sweeps his pride to victory again!

He cares not for the thundering applause
Of an arena's thousands. In this age
He pays his union dues, obeys the laws,
And seems content to earn a living wage.
What can he know of Cæsar's regal thumb
Who, like his blinded burden-beast, is dumb!

LOVE KEEPS A GARDEN

Love keeps her garden by the harbor wall,
Whose blooms bid Youth to halt and to admire
Ere he must pass along. Love's old desire
Grows in her garden, but this is not all
To be enough for Youth. He hears the call
Of distant thunders, better to inspire
In him tumultuous and quenchless fire
For quick adventure in the sudden squall.

When roads and trails become familiar,
And seas, there is no lure in hills and ships,
And Youth discovers still another star
That strangely leads him home to patient lips.
While he explores the world's new-found estates,
Love tends her humble garden plot, and waits.

THERE ARE A HUNDRED HOUSES

There are a hundred houses in the town,
Each locked within its walls. Full shades are drawn
Upon their secrets and, about each lawn,
A fence of hedge is placed. Brown lives for Brown
And Smith for Smith, according to the creed
Which they have given life. Six days they labor,
With trust in God and with distrust in neighbor.
One day they keep, their earnest prayers to plead.

There are a hundred houses in the town,
Each striving for its single share of sun.
Of all theses hundred there is never one
Wherein Brown cares for Smith or Smith for Brown.
Six days of seven they have pledged to labor,
One day to prayer—there is no day for neighbor.

SONNET AFTER RUPERT BROOKE'S
MENELAUS AND HELEN

"And Paris slept," and, sleeping, never knew
The misery that Menelaus took
Homeward from Troy with Helen. By the brook
Which was Scamander, quiet poppies grew,
And Aphrodite came each day to wander,
Plucking armfuls of scarlet anodyne
To place on eyes that had no need. Then wine
Of riper vintage lured her love to sea, and yonder. . . .

When grey weeds drooped where Priam's place did gleam
One time in grandeur, fiery to the death,
And fell unto rich dust of ruin, rotten
With inconsequence, Helen was forgotten
At Scamander side, for deep underneath
Young Paris slept, and did not even dream.

BLACK TROUBADOURS

The orchestra is busy with the Blues,
A haunting rhythm tuned to minor key,
A music which is new to melody,
Which holds within its theme old racial clues:
The marching pulses of black retinues—
Instinctive chords come out of memory—
A monotoned refrain of slavery—
Tattoo of drums and sweep of war canoes!

Forget the dancing. Let the couples dance,
But listen to the singing; you can hear
The distant throb of Ethiopia
Awakening again. Cohorts advance,
Great smokes of hidden jungle camps appear
Above the Congo in old Africa.

HARVEST

All summer long the grapes are ripening.
Each hour brings maturity to bloom,
Weighting the green with purple, burdening
The lazy wind with musky earth perfume.
Waste not the day, Youth! Gather all you see
In the abundant vineyard. Blest occasion—
We have the plenty now. A time may come to be
When poverty and famine make invasion.

Be thrifty with the harvest, Youth, and reap
To eat not all you gather from the vine
So sweetly weighted, nor, Youth, think to heap
The table with excessive fruit. Men dine
On meat for sustenance! Such surplus keep
To warm the winter with the summer's wine.

CONQUERORS

With Cæsar dust now, and Augustus dust,
Tribunal tyranny in Rome is done.

Attila, Xerxes and Napoleon
Have known kings' splendor and departed. Rust
Of rebel years their sheathèd swords encrusts,
And slow time hides the ugly scars upon
The stricken fields where war's cold carrion
Has fed old buzzards with its crumbs and crusts.

The dew-drenched meadows by the Marne again
Are occupied with crops, and Waterloo
Is wild with flowers as deep thunders cease
Their long reverberation. Terror's reign
Is ended now. The Belgian sky is blue,
And life is theirs who love and keep their peace.

EVENSONG

Before the silence of approaching night
Stole Evensong, a shadow on tip-toe.
The river murmured, willows whispered low
A twilight greeting. Day, no longer bright
With sun-gold, vanished slowly o'er the height
Of darkness. New hours come and old hours go,
Was all I heard, nor could I hope to know
The secret of spent dreams and spoilt delight.

I waited for the stars. It strangely seemed
A sad song lingered patiently with me
For, while I sat, long Meditation schemed,
Intent upon her sorrow, Memory
And Mirth danced high a-top the hill, where dreamed
Sweet Music who is mother of the three.

TRUE SHRINE

Shades drawn and still, with but a fleeting day
Ere to the grave the quiet cortège creeps,
The house of sadness sorrow's vigil keeps
With resignation. There life's last bouquet
Of rose and ribbon drapes the door; priests pray;
Men mourn; within a passing presence sleeps
Eternally. Bereft, the widow weeps
A lover's tears time can not wipe away.

This home which sheltered life so faithfully,
And which has now been taught frustration's pain,
In confidence secures each memory
Of hallowed love, forever to remain
A dream to keep an unforgotten face
Love's resident within this sacred place.

DEFEAT

Ten years, below the walls, a war was waged,
 With charge and wild assault without reward,
 Save laurel for the dead. A Spartan lord
By name Ulysses suddenly engaged
In ruse to take the gates. The battle raged
 Within the walls. While Troy died to the sword,
 Fool Menelaus, lost amid his horde,
Wondered if he would find his Helen aged.

Ten years is not too long a time to give
 In combat to defend a dignity,
 Especially where women are concerned.
Ten years is far too long a time to live
 Deep in the depths of hell, especially
 When ten years end with Troy and Helen burned.

SONNET TO A POET WHO SINGS
LOVE SONGS

O happy minstrel, by the Muses blessed,
Herald of youth who dreams of love in May,
You are Dame Fancy's fondest child. But say
Your secret once, reveal and manifest
This tryst you keep with melancholy, lest
The golden minutes pass and go astray.
Must I forsake love's rendezvous each day
When I have latent talents, half-expressed?

O Master, do you ever seek the cup
To nurture inspiration in the brain?
And do you take a tavern seat to sup
With knights romantic at the polished grain?
I wonder at your magic, knowing mine,
And so suspect you dip your quill in wine.

HOMER

Blind was the bard who trudged an ancient road
From ghost-invaded vales in Arcady
Unto Aegean courts; whose minstrelsy
And myth were caroled in a master-code.
His empty eyes knew heights where Venus strode,
And saw the vision of her verity,
As few eyes ever dream or ever see.
His was the sight that visualized a God.

Through mire of darkness to each palace lawn,
With stumbling step he struggled weary-slow;
Yet flamed the beauty of incessant dawn
Within his soul. Two thousand years ago
The glory that was Greece fell to decay . . .
Still Homer sings infinity away.

GREAT NOTCH

Above broad acres planted thick with truck
For city markets, rises sheer the face
Of granite precipice that marks a place
Where quarrymen for twenty years have struck
The green hill slope for gravel. Yonder, high
Beyond this summit, lies a vale of woods,
Of silent shadowed groves, cool solitudes
Of sylvan peace, and quiet forest sky.

Behind the valley road, behind the Inn,
A short half mile beyond a trail of stone,
There is my meadow, there my running rill,
There once I wandered with my chosen kin,
And camp smoke slowly circled o'er the hill.
When youth is gone, then I must walk alone.

DECEMBER MIST

The wharf is desolate. December mist
 Arises from the river, like a ghost
 From out an opened grave to greet its host,
The ghoul night, in a melancholy tryst.
Upon a siding, at a frozen switch,
 Crouch shadowed cars, still in the murky dark.
 A brakeman, his lamp a faltering spark,
Curses the cold and stumbles in a ditch.

The wharf is desolate. The empty shed
 Is silent but for hiss of steam, the sound
Of dripping sea-sweat from the eaves o'erhead,
 The echo of a shriek. Fear is profound!
This is a vision of a world long dead,
Of Hell deserted, its last late fire drowned.

LOUISE

Behind the counter where the bright urns glisten,
Flashes of silver in electric light,
From customer to customer, the night
Throughout, untiring does she glide. I listen
When she brings my coffee, for, quite unknowing,
She whispers to herself a tender sort
Of tune. One time a wine girl in La Porte
Enthralled the drinkers when her eyes were glowing.

She is a waitress, but there must be one
Unending dream which keeps her eyes a-shine,
Her pale lips smiling. Somewhere her sun
Delights a cottage where red ramblers twine,
For, as she serves the early morning throng,
She walks in meadows and she hums a song.

INFIDEL

He loved his fellow man, he loved his God,
And sweetly breathed the breath of brotherhood.
His was the gentle hand which understood
The soulful pulses of the vilest clod,
If ever clods be vile. Alone he trod
A path enchanted by life's greatest good,
Nor did he pray long prayers in solitude,
Nor did he walk wild lengths in sandals shod.

Because he could not hail idolatry
And stupid superstitious ritual,
The holy ones condemned his infamy,
Ordained his penance to be endless hell.
He only smiled and whispered pleasantly:
They must be right. I am an infidel.

JOURNEY'S END

O come to me, memory. Green days are over.

The gipsy from his wayside camp is wandered
Unto his hermitage. The laughing rover

Has found his home deep in the valley, squandered
His youth. The mountain trail once boldly taken

Is from his fading sight by dark years hidden:
The rendezvous with singing seas forsaken,
The passion for the glory road forbidden.

No more for me the all-night carnival,

Oblivious to hours as to stars!

I am too old for sunrise festival,

Too old to laugh at moons and calendars!

O come to me, memory, come bringing only

Old dreams of the green days, for I am lonely.

SURRENDER

Here are my songs. Do with them what you will.

Once having sung them they are mine no more
For quiet pleasure or for sudden thrill.

Glib repetition is a dreary bore—
Let me forget them! Transient, insecure,
Far better be it they should serve a brief
And passing moment's fancy, than endure
The winter frost which waits the fallen leaf.

Sweet is the melody one's ear remembers
And yearns to hear repeated, but beware
The encore! Such echo oft dismembers
The beauty from the dream that once seemed fair
So, having sung, I hurl them from my hill.
Here are my songs. Do with them what you will!

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